

INTERSERVICE RIVALRY IN ACTION

THE ENDLESS ROLES AND MISSIONS REFRAIN? *

COL RICHARD SZAFRANSKI, USAF

REFRAIN HAS two meanings. As a noun, it means a regularly recurring phrase or stanza or an oral repetition. As a verb, it means to defer action, to restrain oneself from doing something. Both the noun and verb forms may apply to the capstone activity of interservice rivalry: debates over roles and missions. This article illuminates and explores what may become a central issue of the upcoming and first refrain (the Quadrennial Strategy Review**), some surrounding issues, and the range of likely outcomes of such a process. The

central issue in the roles and missions debates of the recent past has been the role of air and space forces in the future, and that issue will remain pivotal in any review to come.¹ At least two possibilities exist for such a review. A strategy review, should it become enshrined as a permanently recurring process, promises to accomplish little beyond making the refrain of endless, prolonged, and low-level debate the theme song of the military services. The four major services likely see the first case, which continues a tradition of

*This article is based on a paper presented at the Conference on Interservice Rivalry and the American Armed Forces, held at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, 4–7 March 1996.

**Now called the Quadrennial Program Review.



| Report Documentation Page | | | Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188 | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p> | | | | |
| 1. REPORT DATE 1996 | 2. REPORT TYPE | 3. DATES COVERED 00-00-1996 to 00-00-1996 | | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Interservice Rivalry in Action. The Endless Roles and Missions Refrain? | | | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER | |
| | | | 5b. GRANT NUMBER | |
| | | | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) | | | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER | |
| | | | 5e. TASK NUMBER | |
| | | | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Air and Space Power Journal,155 N. Twining Street,Maxwell AFB,AL,36112-6026 | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | | | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) | |
| | | | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) | |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR) | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 12 |
| a. REPORT unclassified | b. ABSTRACT unclassified | c. THIS PAGE unclassified | | |

dodging contentious issues whenever possible, as the more benign one.

The second possibility is that the first review may step up to the responsibility of examining our strategy, national security processes, the number and structure of the unified commands, and our entire armed forces in the harsh light of the post-cold-war, post-Desert Storm world. The results could be dramatic. An authentically courageous review would examine the multitudinous issues of providing for national security with the processes and organizational forms appropriate for the next century. If a comprehensive and authentic review occurs, it must put the spotlight on the role of airpower and space power in the future. In this case, the central debate will focus on differing views of the utility of surface maneuver forces. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps—services whose principal responsibilities are to organize, train, and equip surface maneuver forces—will face the Air Force, the steward of our country's air and space forces. In a world of uncertainty, such a debate would rely heavily on theory and doctrine. This article examines the latter case in greater detail but does not ignore the possibility that very little might happen in a recurring quadrennial review.

Genesis of Strategy Review

What sparked the need for a strategy review in the first place? A speech by Sen Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) on 2 July 1992 seemed to be the point of origin for what followed: a “bottom-up review” and, in its wake, the law that created the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces (CORM), chaired by John P. White.² Pursuant to the law, the commission did its work and wrote its report. *Directions for Defense: Report of the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces* (May 1995) recommended—among many other things—that a “quadrennial strategy review, [a] comprehensive force and strategy review be conducted at the start of each new Administration.”³ On 25 August 1995, the new deputy secretary of defense—the same John P. White—transmitted to the services and Joint Staff a

copy of Secretary of Defense William Perry’s letter of response to the report that went to Sen Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.). In this letter of 24 August 1995, the secretary of defense wrote that “DOD [Department of Defense] strongly agrees that a comprehensive strategy and defense program review should be conducted in the opening months of each administration.”⁴ Although DOD

“As the United States thinks about its national security responsibilities far into the future, do we realize a greater return on investment from surface maneuver forces or from air and space forces?”

The answer will be garbed in the usual platitudes about the value of jointness.

merely might have agreed, it chose to “strongly” agree, thereby opening the way for the next great potential crisis of interservice rivalry: the first Quadrennial Strategy Review (fig. 1).

Thus, sometime between the election of November 1996 and the budget submission for fiscal year 1999, the services likely will face one another once again on the formal and visible battlefield of internecine squabbling and interservice rivalry. Believing as they do in the intelligence preparation of the battlefield, we would be wise to accept that fighting among the services already has begun as low-level skirmishing. The skirmishers aim to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the competitors, to assay any opportunities for making or breaking contingent alliances, and to prevent surprises when the battle commences in the spring or summer of 1997. Whether the services anticipate a big battle or a little battle, they aim to be ready. It could be a very little battle.

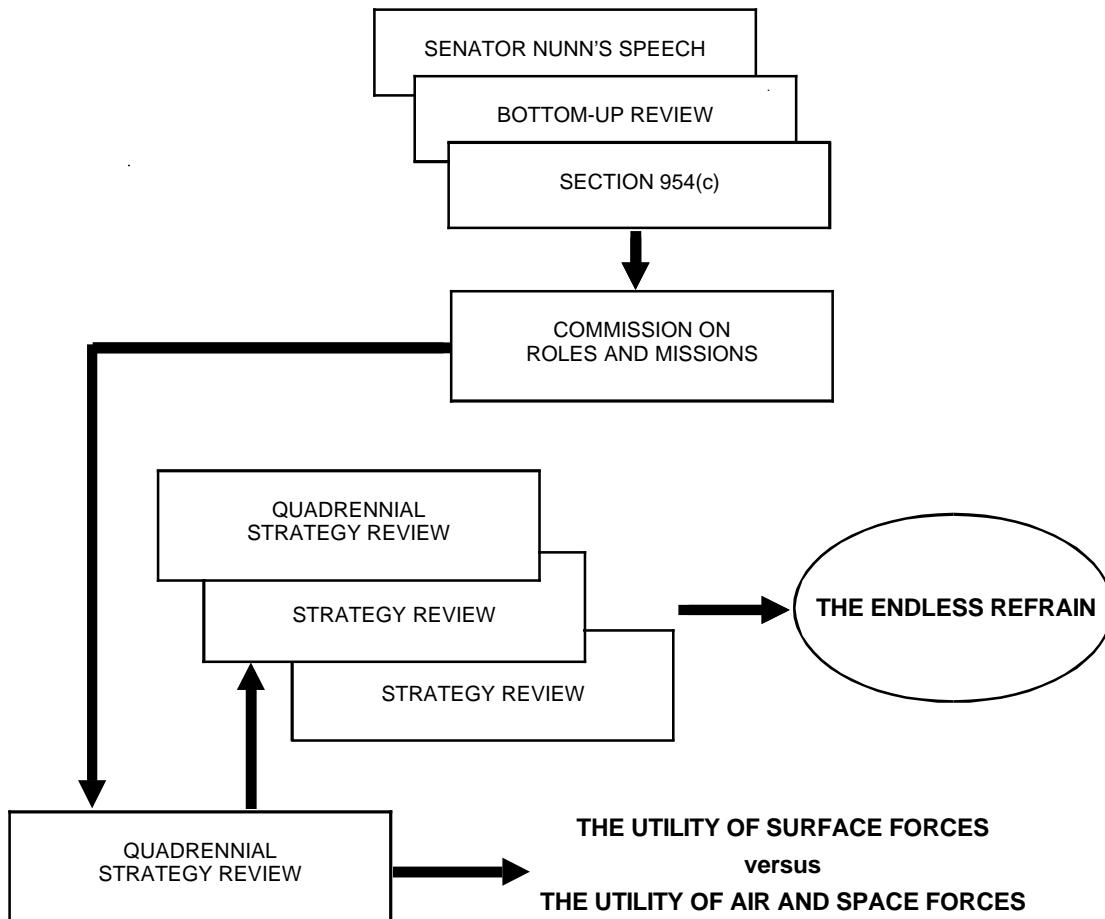


Figure 1. At Least Two Options

Legitimizing Inaction

One of the dangers of espousing "strong" support for a quadrennial review is that recurring reviews may invite—and might even institutionalize—inaction. One might view closure on contentious issues as unnecessary since one can study each and every issue in four-year blocks, only to reexamine them every four years. Yet, this approach is characteristic of the Washington, D.C., mores whereby "nothing ever

ends," as former secretary of state George Shultz observed. Quadrennial reviews, especially those tied to election years and conducted by the organization most likely to be affected by the findings, may not deserve strong intellectual support. A likely outcome in such a case could be little outcome at all.

Thus, the services might see an impotent and recurring review as the better case. Preparation for such a review would include all the attributes already associated with the institutional "slow

roll": proposing an agenda so large and comprehensive that it could not be completed in one or two years; hiring a huge permanent staff and detailing scores of military officers to assist; scheduling hundreds of interviews and dozens of briefings; writing volumes of white papers; and, in the end, publishing a slick, glossy report detailing the work done and the issues remaining for the next quadrennial review. Since the review would be internal, the report would go to the secretary of defense, who could make any changes deemed appropriate.

A problem with a recurring review done by DOD is that our national security decision-making structures are bigger than DOD. If the cold war is indeed over, at some point someone is likely to ask why our country still remains wed to so many cold war structures and processes. My colleague Grant Hammond asks the questions in this way:

If the cold war is over and the military, businesses, and Congress are all involved in downsizing, reengineering, reorganizing, and reinventing themselves—to varying degrees—why are we so confident (versus “comfortable”) with a national security apparatus inherited from the cold war? The National Security Act of 1947, the Key West Agreement, the Department of Defense and National Security Council structures (even as amended), and so forth, may not be the appropriate ones within which to meet new challenges. At the heart of this is a program analysis and evaluation (PA&E), Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), and a budget cycle and calendar which inhibit innovative thinking and reinforce interservice rivalry.⁵

Whether or not one accepts this assessment in its entirety, it illuminates how large—perhaps overwhelmingly large—a comprehensive review would have to be. The likelihood that DOD would urge a larger review than the modest one envisioned by CORM is, in my opinion, quite small. A larger review very likely would require that the legislative branch collaborate with the executive branch to conduct a comprehensive, muzzle-to-stock review. This would necessitate a review of the congressional committee structure, the budget, federal acquisition regulations, the interagency process, the basing structure, and almost everything else that contributes to national

security in a democracy. Stretch as one might, one cannot easily envision anyone in the system with the courage or time to summon forth such a radical reexamination, no matter how necessary and overdue. (One can envision it—it is possible in theory—but one cannot envision it easily.)

The majority of the CINCs (in this regard, the Army and the Navy outnumber the Air Force by a wide margin) very likely will support the Army and the Navy.

Two cases, however, admit of such a possibility. In the first, one of the political parties has control of Congress, and one of its members is in the White House. In the second, Congress is united in its willingness to conduct a comprehensive review, and the executive branch agrees. The key to both is close cooperation between the legislative and executive branches of our government. The more likely case is that most of our cold war structures, having served at least adequately during the cold war, will remain in place under “the devil you know” rule.

As an alternative to a comprehensive review of the system, one could focus on a single element in the system: the armed forces. An examination of this lesser-included case reveals just how complex a larger review could be. At least two alternatives present themselves: (1) a modest review wherein major changes are deferred until the next quadrennial review (the alternative the services probably would prefer) and (2) a comprehensive review of the armed forces. Since the services might view the latter as the less desirable case, it bears closer examination—one which addresses a central question that a comprehensive review needs to answer.

Such a question might be posed as follows: “As the United States thinks about its national security responsibilities far into the future, do we realize a greater return on investment from surface maneuver forces or from air and space forces?”⁶ The

answer will be garbed in the usual platitudes about the value of joint ness, the need to better integrate capabilities, and so forth. Underneath the garb, however, the answer will stand naked. If airpower and space power win assent in the review as highly economical and higher-utility forces, the size and investment in surface maneuver forces will diminish.⁷ If airpower and space power continue to be viewed as useful adjuncts to surface maneuver forces, the Air Force likely will continue to shrink. *Continue* is the correct word; the Air Force has taken the larger share of cuts in service appropriations over the past several years.⁸ The right answers and perhaps even a predictable outcome reside somewhere between the necessity ceiling and the pork floor.

Environmental Considerations

The year 1997 will present a different environment than the one that existed when the Key West Agreement was forged in 1948. Today, the power of the Joint Staff has increased because of oversight groups like JROC and a joint war-fighting capability assessment architecture. The power and authority vested in regional and functional commanders in chief (CINC) are well established. The services are more sophisticated. Admonished by civilian leaders to better integrate the capabilities of the armed forces, the services and Joint Staff are in continual dialogue regarding the apportionment of tasks and responsibilities. The potential for turbulence, upheaval, and serious rivalry is normally controlled by a grinding bureaucratic process that aims to moderate, soften, and blur the sharp lines of disagreement. In the existing conflict-resolution architecture, a dispute deferred or delayed is deemed a dispute resolved. The Joint Staff and the services seem to resist serious change, if for no other reason than the armed forces are among the more conservative institutions in our country. Our armed forces seem to dread extraordinary commissions and reviews such as the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) and the Bottom-Up Review (BUR). To contemplate the

first Quadrennial Strategy Review is to contemplate the possibility that serious and dramatic changes might be mandated. Understandably, the services are anxious.

There may be good reason for anxiety. Conditions that will bound the coming disputation—or perhaps channel it to a very sharp point—could make it more vigorous than past ones on force structure or strategy. Four such conditions—features of the strategic environment, if you will—are as follows: (1) the relaxation of accepted norms for public debates over force structure and strategy; (2) the condition of the country's purse; (3) the fact that the debate will occur during a rare interval when the United States has no obvious enemies able to threaten its vital interests; and, most importantly, (4) the great uncertainty about the nature of a post-cold-war world. If we consider all of these conditions and make modest assumptions about how service cultures will affect the ways the services intend to fight in the upcoming review, the summer of 1997 could find us—as the Chinese curse says—living in a very interesting time.

The Gloves Are Off

The next debate will occur in an environment in which the services have relaxed norms to moderate their behavior in a public quadrennial force structure and strategy review. An existing and seated quadrennial review—the Eighth Quadrennial Commission on Military Compensation—does its work shrouded in an aura of almost blissful irrelevance to the services. Although military compensation is important, such issues simply do not provoke serious debate because they are crosscutting matters that fail to strike at or undercut the central strategic purpose of each service.

Pay is one thing, but force structure and strategy reviews are another matter entirely. We already know that monumental force structure and strategy deliberations—consider the “revolt of the admirals” over the B-36 aircraft—can incite serious fighting. The service chiefs usually prefer to do their fighting in camera in the “tank”⁹ or through their operations deputies and staffs.

Yet, direct and public confrontations—sorties launched by one service or its chief directly against another—are also a possibility. Before he retired, Gen Merrill A. McPeak, chief of staff of the Air Force, may have created a new model when he took the fight over apportionment of the battle space directly to the Army and the Navy in testimony to CORM. His successor, Gen Ronald R. Fogelman, probably is not similarly disposed, but the other service chiefs may believe that the head of the institutional Air Force “broke the rules” during the testimony of the service chiefs to the commission. The Army and the Navy have long institutional memories.

Very likely, the Army and the Navy chiefs—or at least their staffs—viewed the Air Force’s behavior as egregious and unnecessary. Some analysts would have counseled the Air Force that CORM was, after all, just another commission in the life of our post-cold-war democracy. Others would have cautioned that CORM was an armed reconnaissance probing for roles and missions targets for later attack. (It was, as the Chinese strategists would say, “beating the bush to find the snakes.”) Some would assert that the Air Force took CORM much more seriously than its charter should have suggested. Others would argue that the Air Force made itself and the other services more vulnerable by closing on such key issues as the apportionment of the battle space and investments planned by the other services. Most commentators might opine that the Air Force violated some of the norms of interservice rivalry.¹⁰

Air Force doctrine has remained somewhat fluid since the Air Force became a separate service, changing a dozen times in less than 50 years.

Thus, in the upcoming review we might expect the Army and the Navy to feel free to address, however reluctantly, such things as the added value and cost of the F-22 aircraft in relation to threat and capability, alternative technical solutions for the delivery of precision weapons, the proper apportionment of responsibility for theater ballistic missile defense, and the shortage of strategic lift. If the Army and the Navy find direct attacks on the Air Force necessary or even highly useful, we might also expect them to attribute their behavior to the Air Force’s previous behavior. Service chiefs within one year of retiring may be less constrained in this combat than more recently appointed chiefs. Very senior chiefs also might be affected by what others have called “the arrogance of long command.”¹¹ The press—the unorthodox and often unwitting troops of the services—also might enter the fray, increasing the possibility that the upcoming fight could be especially caustic. The fifth column of retirees and lobbyists—the Retired Officers Association, the Marine Corps Reserve Officers Association, the Navy League, the Air Force Association, and other such groups—will work behind the scenes and behind the lines to enliven the debate. What would precipitate such a pointed debate? Money.

There Is No More Money

Money—or the lack of it—suggests that the upcoming debates might be especially keen. The major political parties have more or less agreed that economic vitality underpins national strength and that a balanced budget and deficit reduction must become national priorities. Assessing the effects of a balanced budget suggests that each of the services could be subject to large cuts. Large in this case might be tens of billions of dollars each year until the deficit is reduced.¹² Thus, the upcoming review could face the challenge of apportioning hefty cuts to the services. In this case, each service very likely will scoot down Maslow’s pyramid to the survival level and

prepare arguments proving that another service is more eligible for cuts.

The Air Force has no metrics or war games . . . to demonstrate the power of airpower.

A Pentagon admiral, speaking under the promise of nonattribution, observed that such fighting has already begun, acknowledging, "It used to be a race to the finish line. Now it's more like a demolition derby: to get your program across the finish line, you have to convince others [the JROC] to kill another service's program."¹³ An approach opposite the demolition derby tactic is also effective: getting partners to support one service's program in return for support of another's program. These partners may be services or some of the CINCs. In this approach, a program not on the bandwagon is a program walking to doom. Depending on how big or full a bandwagon needs to be, production contractors, Congress, retirees, the press, and state and local governments can swell support.

Cutting force structure or killing programs is key, of course. According to some analyses, cutting an active Army division or a Navy battle group and its associated air wings saves as much as \$4 billion annually. These big-ticket, high-visibility items are lucrative targets, and the services know it. Add to this the demise of some modernization programs—a new destroyer, more B-2s, the F-22, or the V-22—and one need address no smaller cost-containment issues. Some people believe that killing the F-22, for example, could save \$3 billion annually.¹⁴ Force structure cuts disconnected from a reframing of the national security strategy or the national military strategy are less rational than cuts that follow naturally from a new vision of national security—which, of course, is not to suggest that strict objectivity is possible or even that rationality is ever the dominant objective.

This new vision of national security must emerge during an era when our country is hard put to pinpoint a credible, clear, and present danger to its security. In the presence of the great unknown—the identity of our next enemy—we will fall back on the knowns of history and our tested utilitarian models. Thus, the upcoming debate naturally will carry the great weight of different political science theories and military theories. It will focus on the ways in which the US might synthesize a new vision of national security and military strategy from what we know to be true, believe to be true, and expect to be true.

Theoretical Enemies and Hypothetical Responses

Some political scientists will advance evidence that states are less powerful actors and threats than they once were, that national security in the next century will be inseparable from international security, or even that a clash of civilizations is on the horizon.¹⁵ These arguments are interesting for the services, but none are compelling. The armed forces place greater faith in the strength of their doctrine and the repetitiveness of history—in how they might have fought the last war better.¹⁶

During the upcoming debate, the services will appeal to doctrine, history, tradition, and reason to make their arguments. The major difference this time, I suggest, will be that the Army and the Navy will ally to show the utility of investments in surface maneuver forces—including their already “organic” air and space capabilities—over investments in Air Force air superiority and precision strike far into the future. The majority of the CINCs (in this regard, the Army and the Navy outnumber the Air Force by a wide margin) very likely will support the Army and the Navy, who will not do this by attacking Air Force programs or even by directly refuting whatever airpower theories the Air Force advances. They will not even synchronize their attacks and launch them in collusion. Rather, the Army and the Navy will

strive to assert superior theories, replete with his - torical examples that underpin their future vision.

We Just Don't Know

Overarching all these attributes of the environ - ment is the unease springing from uncertainty. Never having lived in a post-cold-war world, we are very uncomfortable living in it. We even are uncomfortable postulating enemies against whose capabilities we ought to hedge or plan. To plan against the capabilities of a resurgent Russia is as impolitic as planning against the capabilities of a nation to which we have granted most-favored-nation status for trade and tariff.

The Arguments

In the absence of a clearly identifiable enemy, we are driven even harder to rely on theory and doctrine. Theory is about the how and why of military action, and doctrine is about the precise ways in which enemies are defeated militarily. Thus, everything seems to converge in debates about theory and doctrine. If this is so, it is pos - sible to anticipate the arguments.

America's Army

The Army will remind us that it is America's army and that one ought not try to remain a su - perpower without an army equal to superpower responsibilities. There is no form of equipment more sophisticated than simple, all-weather, all-terrain soldiers, who—the Army's war games show—are the answer to the search for the elusive “reconnaissance-strike complex.” The Army, the Army will remind us, is vital across the spectrum of conflict. Our Army can engage in peacekeep - ing, nation building, humanitarian operations, or large-scale conventional conflict. It must be heavy because enemies might be heavy and our own Marines are “light.” Our Army possesses (to steal a phrase from the Marines) certain capabili - ties for an uncertain future. Territory matters even in the “Third Wave,” the Army will assert.¹⁷ And

no one can repulse an enemy army and retake or hold territory but an army.

The Army will testify both to its versatility and to its strategic power. The versatility of disciplined, well-trained humans is being proven in Bosnia—and more Bosnias rather than fewer promise to populate the future. The Army can demonstrate its power by ana lyzing its war games and exercises. The Army will document this data with the historical experience of the “certain vic - tory” in the Gulf War.¹⁸ Air forces can help in - fluence events on the ground and can help shape the battles, but in and of themselves—and short of the omnicide of nuclear holocaust—they are incapable of winning a decisive victory or even of controlling events on the ground, the Army will argue. The air battle, the Army will suggest, really is only an adjunct to the AirLand Bat - tle—thus was it always so; thus will it always be.

Naval Necessity

The Navy will assert that the United States is an island nation and that the Naval Expeditionary Task Force or the Marine Air Ground Task Force is the key to national military success and survival. It will trot out John Keegan and assert that fight - ing in the future will occur along the littoral. It will argue that “physical presence” is superior to untested notions of “virtual” global presence. The carrier battle group is a self-contained air base and can operate either in international waters or fight its way in and out of closed seas, it will declare. Because the carrier battle group is mobile and instantly deployable, the Navy will argue that this unit is insensitive to foreign basing or even overflight rights. Past US presidents, it will sug - gest, acknowledged the power of the naval in - strument by using the Navy or the Marine Corps as the force of choice for intervention. Always an extraterritorial force, the Navy can come and go as the president pleases. When it moves to - ward a crisis area, others attend to the signifi - cance of that movement. Why, the Navy will ask, would anyone want to reduce the most pow - erful navy on the planet to a position of impo - tence when we know that the remaining hermit kingdoms of the world reside astride the littoral?

Most of the planet's population, it will argue, is concentrated within a few hundred miles of the littoral. It will reveal its analyses of naval war games to show the added value of an immensely potent navy and of its organic and combined-arms light and expeditionary naval infantry as conflict-resolution mechanisms for the future.

The Air and Space Conundrum

The Air Force will have—or could have—a tougher row to hoe in the upcoming debates. If the Army and the Navy separately demonstrate the very high utility of surface maneuver forces in the immediate and distant future, the Air Force has two huge chores. First, it must dispute those very nearly indisputable arguments without further provoking the Army and the Navy. Second, it must contest the efficacy of surface maneuver doctrine and theory by advancing a credible and superior theory illuminating the underappreciated power of airpower. In so doing, the Air Force also must avoid the trap of focusing its argument on its air and space platforms, knowing that, given the opening, both the Army and the Navy—and the CINCs—are willing to talk about platforms. Although Air Force chiefs of staff, like all the service chiefs, have the statutory obligation to organize, train, and equip forces for the combatant CINCs, the Air Force might be lulled, Icarus-like, into focusing only on equipage, incorrectly assessing that the debate is about equipment.¹⁹

The debate, I suggest, will not focus on equipment as much as it focuses on political science, military theory, and doctrine emerging from theory. Here, the Navy will wield the hammer of history and use it to pound awareness of the incapable geography of the planet into the consciousness of the reviewers. America's Army has the powerful weapons of history and doctrine and is well equipped to engage in a debate on political science, military theory, and doctrine emerging from theory. In this arena, the Air Force could (or will) find itself at a disadvantage.

Theories of Airpower and Space Power

Air Force doctrine has remained somewhat fluid since the Air Force became a separate service, changing a dozen times in less than 50 years. Even today (a cynic might opine "most days"), a change to Air Force doctrine is in draft.²⁰ Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the diminution of what used to be called the "strategic nuclear deterrence mission," the Air Force appears to be searching for a post-cold-war *raison d'être*. Although a massive effort is under way to revitalize long-range planning within the Air Force, the prospects for such a revitalization are not good unless it is driven by vision and as long as purpose and platform remain closely linked within the minds of Air Force leaders. The Air Force has no metrics or war games—beyond simple or complex attrition models inherited from the Army—to demonstrate the power of airpower. The Army can use attrition or the movement of the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA) to show what armies can do. The Army can assert that it has a system of internetted "battle labs" to continuously test and refine its doctrine. The Army can assert that future competitor states will most certainly possess an army.

The Air Force can talk of the "enemy as a system" or of striking plural strategic "centers of gravity," but few people in the Air Force know precisely what those phrases mean.²¹ Metrics, the imprecision of Air Force models, the quest for space, information-warfare dominance—all this is reminiscent of an overly diversified corporation whose errant product divisions march to different drummers while corporate headquarters focuses on manned air superiority fighters.²² Is this the kind of organization we would expect to advance convincing arguments that air and space forces will have higher utility than surface maneuver forces in the distant future? Will the Air Force be able to demonstrate convincingly that air superiority and airpower defeat enemies? Probably not.

At the End of the Day

So how will it all turn out? Only the naive do

not understand that at the end of the day, force-structuring decisions are a matter of politics in a democracy. “Politics,” a very senior politician said, “is who is sticking who and who is sucking up to whom at any given moment.”²³ If the administration in power finds it impolitic to make massive cuts to one service, it matters little which service bests the other in a debate or a review. If the administration in power finds it useful to make massive cuts, either a fair-share scheme or a necessary-and-sufficient scheme might be employed. A fair-share approach reduces all the services by some margin. A necessary-and-sufficient solution assesses the capabilities of the forces we have against the capabilities we need or the threats we expect to face.

The Army-Navy alliance will attempt to defeat by circumvention whatever arguments the Air Force raises about the power of airpower. . . . Airmen may then find themselves clinging to military medicine, space (including intercontinental ballistic missiles), and information operations.

In the fair-share approach, services with the greatest inherent slack will do better than those managing closer to the margin. Technology-intensive enterprises have less slack than personnel-intensive ones, but they also have potentially greater recovery capacity. A fair-share cut would, I believe, hurt the Air Force worse than the other services. To defer the Air Force’s big-ticket items—if the Air Force remains wed to them—is to euthanize these programs. To continue pumping money into a delayed or “stretched out” program is a form of whistling through the graveyard.

In the necessary-and-sufficient approach, the services with the best theory and doctrine probably will do better than those whose theories lack the

underpinning of historical proof. If airpower advocates rely on a theory that places air superiority at center stage (if the platform becomes the problem, this is likely to happen), then the Air Force faces a dilemma. It must have the support of the other services and the CINCs for its theory. The air superiority theory is too easily nullified by awareness that air superiority may earn little in fights against what the Tofflers call “demassified” forces.²⁴ What if fights with these kinds of dispersed forces characterize the future? The US had air superiority in Vietnam. The Soviets had air superiority in Afghanistan. Thus, the Air Force must prove the air superiority theory with another theory: that fights of the future mandate present investments in air superiority so that we will have it with an old platform when the future need arises.

An implicit assumption in the theory underpinned by a theory is, unfortunately, yet another theory. That is, the Air Force must theorize that the theory of air superiority requires an atmospheric technical solution—not a surface one or a space one—and that the atmospheric technical solution only can be provided by a system with a human in the cockpit of the theoretical platform. At some point, the weight of theory would seem to some people to be heavy enough to collapse this model. Thus, the Air Force faces an almost intractable problem. It loses if the reviewers mandate across-the-board, fair-share cuts. It loses if it must fight and win the necessary-and-sufficient argument. Even if the necessary-and-sufficient model is employed, there is a real pork floor beneath which we will not go. The problem is that we do not know where that floor is. Knowing where future weapons systems will be produced provides a clue, but it does not provide an answer.²⁵

My guess is that the Army-Navy alliance will attempt to defeat by circumvention whatever arguments the Air Force raises about the power of airpower. The platform consequences for the Air Force would then follow logically. Strategic lift is essential (our present *military*-owned lift is insufficient), so more C-17s are inevitable.²⁶ The surface maneuver forces probably will suggest that today’s Air Force-operated air superiority force

is both necessary and sufficient, although some modest upgrades and smarter weapons may be required. Leaders of the surface maneuver forces will remind us that those forces bear the proximate burden of a failure to achieve air superiority. The Army and the Navy will demonstrate how modest investments—in the Army and Navy air defense systems and naval aviation, of course—can offset those risks. The Army and Navy are likely to say, “If we are willing to take those risks—and we might be willing because both uncertainty of the future and the national treasury suggest that we must be—then that should weigh heavily in national deliberations.” If the Air Force has defined itself in terms of the platforms it possesses or wishes to purchase—and if pork does not intervene—airmen may then find themselves clinging to military

medicine, space (including intercontinental ballistic missiles), and information operations.²⁷

There is, however, a way out of this dilemma. The service chiefs can agree to put interservice rivalry aside, to forget past grievances, to speak with one voice. This, however, could occur only in an aviation fantasy world—a world where pigs fly. No matter what a quadrennial strategy review concludes, we still will have an Army, a Navy, an Air Force, and a Marine Corps. No service will be so diminished that it is incapacitated. We are fighters, warriors, and survivors. We will live together to fight in another quadrennial review. Likelier than not, we will embrace the refrain and affirm that an important element of jointness is willingness to sing the refrain—if not in harmony, at least from the same sheet of music.



Notes

1. See Col Richard Szafranski, “Annulling Marriages: Reframing the Roles, Missions, and Functions Debate,” *Airpower Journal* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 55–67.

2. See Sam Nunn, “The Defense Department Must Thoroughly Overhaul the Services’ Roles and Missions,” *Vital Speeches* 20 (1 August 1992): 717–24. Senator Nunn gave this speech in the US Senate on 2 July 1992. See also Les Aspin, *The Bottom-Up Review: Forces for a New Era* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1 September 1993). *Report on the Bottom-Up Review* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense) followed on 1 October 1993.

3. *Directions for Defense: Report of the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 1995), 4–9.

4. John P. White, deputy secretary of defense, memorandum to the military services and Joint Staff, subject: Secretary of Defense’s Response to the Report of the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, 25 August 1995.

5. Grant Hammond, chair of National Security Strategy, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., conversation with author, 17 February 1996.

6. Others may view the central question as neither a dichotomy nor as a “true”dichotomy (as opposed to the cliché of a “false dichotomy”). On the contrary, the central question passes the test of a true dichotomy: there are two distinct and mutually exclusive parts. See Pennington, page 65, this issue.

7. Col John A. Warden III, “Air Theory for the Twenty-first Century,” in Dr Karl P. Magyar et al., eds., *Challenge and Response: Anticipating US Military Security Concerns* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, August 1994), 326–29. Warden asserts that one of the 10 concepts that describe “the revolution of the Gulf War” and that must be taken into account “as we develop new force levels” is “the dominance of air power” (page 326). Some people do not agree that airpower dominated in the Gulf War. See, for example, Robert H. Scales, *Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993); and Michael R. Gordon and

Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals’ War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1994).

8. A review of appropriations indicates that congressional cuts levied on DOD and the services between 1991 and 1995 resulted in average percentage reductions of 2.4 percent for DOD, 2.9 percent for the Navy, 0.2 percent for the Army, and 5.5 percent for the Air Force. Thus, Air Force cuts were 27 times greater than cuts taken from the Army and exceeded cuts to surface maneuver forces by a wide margin.

9. The “tank” is the Joint Chiefs of Staff conference room (Pentagon, room 2E924). It is here that the operations deputies of each service chief meet to settle (or start) disagreements over strategies, roles, missions, functions, and forces. It is here that the joint chiefs meet to resolve disagreements.

10. I believe that General McPeak approached the issues in good faith and after much reflection on an arrangement that simultaneously would increase combat effectiveness in all the warfare media, reduce duplicative force structure investments, and reduce the likelihood of future squabbles over roles and missions.

11. A very senior retired officer, speaking to Air War College students under the promise of nonattribution, used these words as a possible explanation for the behavior of some service chiefs in debates on roles and missions.

12. Michael E. O’Hanlon, *Defense Planning for the Late 1990s: Beyond the Desert Storm Framework* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), 4. O’Hanlon suggests that cuts on the order of \$40 billion each year or a total DOD appropriation of \$200 billion annually (in 1995 dollars) would be required to meet balanced-budget targets. See page 34 of O’Hanlon for savings for specific force elements.

13. The admiral made these remarks during a speech to Air War College students.

14. O’Hanlon, 34–35.

15. See Carl Builder, “Roles and Missions: Back to the Future,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 4 (Spring 1994): 32–37; Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 3 (Summer 1993): 22–49; and Paul M. Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1993), 129–30.

16. Viewed in this light, some people might reasonably conclude that the focus of Air Force testimony to CORM, although dressed in the clothes of future fights, was really aimed at creating a new joint doctrine and that all the services would be bound to it. Such doctrine would have emerged from the Air Force chief's proposal for solving the air operations and ground coordination problems discovered during the last few days of February 1991 in the war against Iraq.

17. Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1980). See also Alvin Toffler and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1993).

18. See Scales.

19. The fact that three of the last four Air Force chiefs, including the current chief, were Air Staff programmers suggests that focusing on platforms—what Carl Builder calls the “Icarus syndrome”—might be difficult to avoid. See Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

20. On 22 February 1996, Prof Dennis Drew, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Maxwell AFB, Ala., pointed out to me that although 12 different versions of Air Force doctrine have been published in 50 years, “most tinkered only at the extreme margins. I would argue that we have had three doctrines (theories) over that period and in those 12 publications: (1) strategic nuclear bombing is the be-all and end-all of airpower (1953–1971); (2) a gradual shift to tacair [tactical airpower] is the be-all and end-all (1971–1992); and (3) there is no universal formula (1992–present).” If doctrine is a body of faith built on experience, one might ask what experiences caused conversion of the faithful at each of the major epochs and the present.

21. See Dr Lewis Ware, “Some Observations of the Enemy as a System,” *Airpower Journal* 9, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 87–93. See also Col Richard Szafranski, “Parallel War: Promise & Problems,” US Naval Institute *Proceedings* 121, no. 110 (August 1995): 57–61.

22. Form should follow function. Function must be linked inex-

tricably to a clear understanding—strategic foresight—of the organization’s central strategic purpose. To remain vital, competitive, and focused, the organization must have the discernment and courage to eliminate activities and people that do not contribute to the organization’s central strategic purpose. If this is so, why, one might ask, are 20 percent of the people in the Air Force in the medical or health professions? If the mission of the Air Force is “to fly and fight” or “to control and exploit the air and space,” why is one-fifth of the Air Force dedicated to health and medicine? For an insightful discussion of “industry foresight” and “core competencies,” see Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad, *Competing for the Future* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1994), 76, 202–11.

23. A very senior elected official, speaking to an Air University class under the promise of nonattribution, used this definition.

24. Toffler, *War and Anti-War*, 59–60.

25. For example, one might ask in whose state(s) or congressional district(s) the F-22 is assembled.

26. The heavier the mass of surface maneuver forces, the more lift required. Thus, and in this regard, the Air Force is driven by the way the Army is structured. The Army is structured by its doctrine. Its doctrine derives from its theory. Thus, and in a very real way, land warfare theory appears to drive the force structure of Air Force airlift. It may not drive it if we accept that air transportation need not always be military air transportation or that short-haul transportation need not be Air Force transportation. Although difficult to accept, the same relationship between surface warfare doctrine and Air Force force structure may hold for other Air Force activities.

27. Better self-awareness would make some of the problems faced by the Air Force more tractable. Martin Libicki and I argue in a forthcoming article entitled “. . . Or Go Down in Flame?”—scheduled for publication in the fall issue of this journal—that the Air Force needs to move away from self-definition as an atmospheric force and embrace a broader, better definition of itself.

Contributor

Col Richard Szafranski (BA, Florida State University, MA Central Michigan University) is the first holder of the Chair of National Military Strategy at the Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Alabama. Colonel Szafranski’s duties have included staff positions in the headquarters of Strategic Air Command, United States Space Command, North American Aerospace Defense Command, and Air Force Space Command. He has commanded B-52 units at the squadron and wing levels, most recently as commander of the 7th Bomb Wing, Carswell AFB, Texas, from 1991 to 1993. He was also the base commander of Peterson AFB, Colorado. His writings on military strategy and operational art also have appeared in *Parameters*, US Naval Institute *Proceedings*, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, *Military Review*, *Naval War College Review*, and *Strategic Review*. Colonel Szafranski is a graduate of Air Command and Staff College and Air War College.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed or implied in the Journal are those of the authors and should not be construed as carrying the official sanction of the Department of Defense, the Air Force, Air Education and Training Command, Air University, or other agencies or departments of the US Government. Articles may be reproduced in whole or in part without permission. If they are reproduced, the Airpower Journal requests a courtesy line.